

January 27, 2020

City of McMinnville Planning Department
Attn: Charles Darnell
231 NE Fifth Street
McMinnville, Oregon 97128

RE: Stafford – CPA 1-19; ZC 1-19; PDA 2-19; PD 1-19; s 1-19; L 2-19

Dear Mr. Darnell,

I have the following comments about Stafford's Charbonneau-produced traffic study:

1. Why was it recommended to exclude the Hill Road/Baker Creek intersection when it's currently the nearest intersection to the proposed commercial zone as it is now laid out? Do we not want to know how the new roundabout is actually performing before we add additional traffic load to it?
2. The traffic study was done in July and morning and evening traffic patterns on Baker Creek are significantly different during the school year, nine months of the year, and the summer, only three months of the year.
3. Despite Charbonneau's assertion that all of Baker Creek is posted at 35mph around the proposed new Baker Creek North access points, the speed limit along Baker Creek Road from Hill to past Meadows is 45mph. It is posted, although the west direction sign and post disappeared from Stafford property within a few weeks of it being reinstalled when the road construction was done (the sign was just past the large oak trees on the north side of Baker Creek Road near the entrance where they dump soil). If nothing else, Charbonneau should have seen the eastbound 45mph sign since it is in the section of road they were contracted to study. Maybe they're not as observant as they should be.



Wikipedia defines engineering tasks as:

Engineers develop new technological solutions. During the engineering design process, the responsibilities of the engineer may include defining problems, conducting and narrowing research, analyzing criteria, finding and analyzing solutions, and making decisions.

The Balance Careers say:

Engineers are problem solvers who use their expertise in science and math to do their jobs.

I'm curious where the statement that McMinnville citizens need to "just deal with the traffic" falls within those definitions. I'm surprised that an engineer, much less a McMinnville engineer, would respond to citizen concerns with a statement like that. I'm willing to assume that the response was generated by frustration caused by lack of ideas, so let me throw some ideas out to get a brainstorming session going.

Working east to west, I believe these relatively simple changes could make a positive difference:

1. **Baker Creek Road and 99W intersection.** I have been told that McMinnville cannot control the lights on 99W because that is state-controlled. *IF* that is correct, while we wait for a left turn signal to be installed, have we ever considered making that intersection a three-way light intersection rather than a two-way intersection? I mean alternate the light sequences for Baker Creek and Evans so that left turns can be made from Baker onto 99W without having to fight oncoming Evans Street traffic. The lights would be short, but at least people would know that 4 or 5 cars could get through at a time rather than zero. If it's not true that the state controls lights on 99W that change should have already been made.
2. **Baker Creek Road and Elm Street.** Make the west entrance to the Baker Creek church parking lot "exit only." When cars traveling east on Baker Creek Road use that as an entrance, it blocks the Elm Street intersection. An "exit only" sign for that one parking lot driveway seems like a simple solution.



3. **Proposed Michelbook Intersection Light.** *Don't do it.* A light at Michelbook will simply make it very difficult for cars trying to turn east onto Baker Creek Road from both Alice Kelley and Crimson Streets and you all will hear about. I doubt even painting a “box” in both of those street intersections would work since people still block the “box” by the police station. If people won't respect a police station entrance/exit, I doubt they will respect a basic intersection. You have an opportunity to avoid making McMinnville live with a decision based on a plan done ten years ago. Take advantage of it.



4. **Put a Light at Pinehurst.** Pinehurst has better sight lines in both east and west directions without having other street intersections right next to it. All that needs to happen at Michelbook to have traffic be able to turn on and off of Michelbook is to have a traffic break – it's not a through intersection; it's a T-intersection. A light at Pinehurst will achieve that break without blocking two other intersections.



5. **Move the Location of the Proposed Baker Creek North Commercial Zone East to the Area Near the Electric Substation and Put a Light at Meadows.** That puts the commercial area across the street from Meadows, which is next to the BPA trail. Since the trail is to be continued through Baker Creek North, the enhanced intersection will provide a safer pedestrian crossing site for people wanting to use the entire trail. It will provide a safer intersection for foot traffic to access whatever commercial tenants might be found for Baker Creek North.

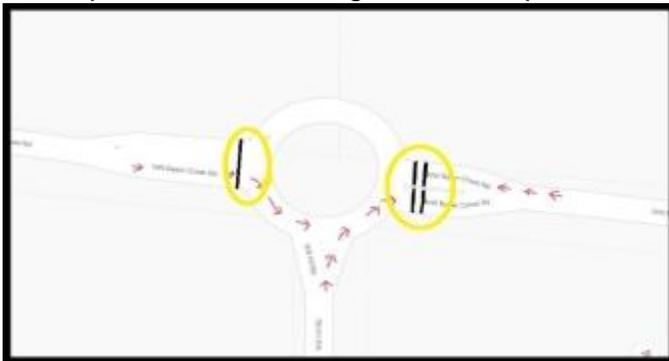


Moving the commercial site also means that potential delivery trucks will be able to avoid an undersized roundabout without driving through proposed residential streets and it should encourage Hill Road pedestrian traffic away from the roundabout. The roundabout is too small, so if a pedestrian uses the “crosswalk” portion as indicated, the entire intersection has to grind to a halt. If it was still a standard four-way stop, east bound cars would still be able to turn north or south.



The current roundabout is too small to allow more than two cars to back up there and still allow following cars to use the remainder of the roundabout. I know the politically correct term is traffic “calming.” I think we’re being naïve if we don’t admit the term is “frustrating.” That term now applies to the entire Baker Creek section, as I believe you’ve all been informed.

- 6. Eliminate the North-South Pedestrian Crossings on the East and West Sides of the Baker Creek-Hill Road Roundabout.** As I noted above, the roundabout is too small to accommodate pedestrians and cars, especially at peak commute times. I already expressed concern about the size of the roundabout as well as the location and lighting of the pedestrian crossing several months (years?) ago (verbally to the Planning Director, who kindly gave me the contact information of the project manager, who I emailed). I know traffic types in the U.S. are very excited about roundabouts and think we should follow Europe’s lead since roundabouts have been used for years over there. I guess the roundabout enthusiasts don’t read the same research I do: a British newspaper listed the top worst intersections in Britain – three of the top four were roundabouts. Britain is in the process of taking roundabouts out because they haven’t found a way to make pedestrians and bicyclists work well with cars in roundabouts. That information was available long before we decided to roundabout Hill Road, so once again, we have to live with the results. Closing those pedestrian crossings would help.



Everything I've listed are simple fixes, even moving the location of the commercial zone, provided we take the time now to do what makes sense for McMinnville instead of rushing six detailed, interrelated, how-does-one-impact-the-other-five changes to a vote. Maybe it's not the most convenient for Stafford, but it's the best decision for McMinnville. For the past two-plus months, I've watched exhausted people wading through volumes of paperwork and trying to understand complicated issues under unrealistic time pressures. Good people are testy and poor decisions are being made. To quote Heather Richards yet again, we have to live with what is built for the next 100 years. Please keep that in mind.

Patty O'Leary